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ABSTRACT

Some of the major principles of the evaluation process are analyzed to provide a better understanding of the basic requirements for any type of evaluation in educational programs in schools. Of major concern is the role of a given value system in the establishment of goals and in the subsequent assessment of their attainment. Through an awareness of these value systems, the individuals involved in the educational process can form a productive coalition. A common value standard permits the individual to draw a more meaningful relationship between goals and strategies for change, and the information generated becomes part of the evaluative process. (PR)

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EVALUATION: A RELATIONSHIP OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND VALUES[a]

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Today evaluation is a process which is often poorly defined and improperly used. All too frequently a definition of evaluation is assumed and taken for granted; few efforts today make an attempt to formulate rigorous definitions or to analyze some of the major principles of evaluation. As a consequence, the term evaluation means a variety of things to a variety of people. Also, there appears to be an absence of any clear cut understanding of the basic requirements for any type of evaluation in educational programs in schools. We find a wide variety of evaluation studies e.g. surveys, testimonials, statistics, etc. all of which are classified under the rubric of evaluation. These kinds of studies vary from everyone's being happy and content to a complex experimental design. They include some very subjective assessments and some detailed statistical analyses. Consequently, the whole area of evaluation is conspicuous by its lack of comparability and cummulativeness of its findings. The results obtained for different purposes by different methods using different criteria lead to a confusion which is difficult to resolve in the frequent absence of any explicit statement of objectives or procedures.

Riechen (1952) has described evaluation as the measurement of desirable and undesirable consequences of an action that has been taken in order to move toward some goal that we value. His concept of evaluation is uniquely suited to the

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evaluation of educational activities since we advocate planned and deliberate educational and social change in our schools. This emphasis upon social change in an evaluation study is further underscored by Hyman (1962). He defines evaluation as "the procedures of fact-finding about the results of planned social change." His article further attempts to distinguish between evaluation and basic research. This distinction is also made by the Sub-committee on Evaluation of Mental Health Activities of the National Advisory Health Council, (1955) which says that "evaluation thus connotes scientific method, but has characteristics that distinguish it from that type of research whose objective is the accumulation and analysis of data in order to formulate hypotheses and theory for the sake of new knowledge itself, irrespective of judgment of the value of the knowledge."

Any concept of evaluation has implied within it the notion of values. Therefore, one of the determining factors in the establishment of objectives is the conscious awareness of one's value orientation. This is reflected in the notion that one of the preconditions for planned activity is that objectives in and of themselves have value. Values may be defined generally as those aspects of a situation or thing which are considered to be good or bad. King (1962) has defined values as "the principles by which we establish priorities and hierarchies of importance among needs, demands and goals." In any event, value orientations are relevant to educational evaluation because they are, at least, the partial determinants of objectives of educational programs. 1. Educational activity in schools is organized around sets of values or around the standards of those who are assuming the responsibility for the operation of the educational institutions. The relationship between these standards and the social change expected from educational programs is tremendously important in terms of analyzing objectives and their underlying assumptions as well as in providing a framework for

evaluating improvement toward or away from goals.

Evaluation always starts with some value either explicit or implicit. For example, it is good to have as much education as one wants and is able to achieve. Value is reflected in the quality of goodness; then goals are generated and derived from this value. The selection of a goal is usually preceded or concurrent with the formation of a value system. An example of setting a goal would be that everyone involved in the education process ought to have some opportunity to express himself in the development of that process. Movement toward such a goal is usually dependent upon various forces which are frequently in competition with one another in the determination of both the goals and the available resources. Quite often the assumption is made that change is good which is difficult to validate. For instance, the belief that others can be depended upon to do the right thing or that information will enable a person to change an attitude.

Through a conscious awareness of value stnadards people involved in a learning process can begin to develop a meaningful and productive coalition. Such a coalition does not have to take the form of a merger where differences are modulated or erased; rather, the coalition can be viewed as a struggle to bring differences in people together, and those differences can begin to forge an alliance which enables each person to amplify or complement one another in the total learning experience. For example, a program designed to reduce the incidence of dropouts might prove ineffective if it was to provide for the buildings of fences around school yards to prevent runaways or develop rules prohibiting truancy. People learn not only by being told but also through experience. They examine one another not only in terms of what is done. Learning not only takes place in the formal curriculum but also in what is experienced in the daily life organization of the school. The key to change lies in changing the quality of those life experiences. As experiences alter and change is raised to a conscious level, new

directions become possible. Interaction among the involved people must be organized in terms of value standards which can be consciously explicated and enacted in experience. A value standard has meaning only as it is tested in the daily decisions in the structure of the school. It has meaning only as the actual relationship and the events in the school change and when the people involved in that change are involved in the evaluation process.

One of the underlying objectives of the programs (Eisenstein, 1968) which have attempted to utilize a value standard is that objective which implies that schools should provide the laboratory in which students and teachers learn to accept the responsibility to communicate and think and learn to live in a world of change and interchange in which people find security not in the status quo but in the mastery of change. Therefore, the adaptive abilities of individuals need to be emphasized and strengthened. Consequently, there is an emphasis placed on the relationship and interrelatedness of the student's role and the educator's role. When such a coalition exists, alienation among students and educators is reduced, and the hostile territories that once prevailed are diminished.

Change requires the involvement of the total school. Educational development (viz. academic and social) requires not only interchange among the various groups within the school but change which bridges the generation gap so that students and adults can be involved meaningfully. Earliest experiences by students in situations which exist in schools leave sharp imprints on their educational lives; sometimes these are unacknowledged or even denied. Educators for many years have been describing the clash between the organized open curriculum of the school and the "hidden curriculum." The instructional content is often referred to as the organized curriculum. The hidden curriculum, on the other hand, is the social organization of the schools, the life continuum of the student; this includes the atmosphere of the classroom, the halls, the cafeteria,

the "who's who" of the school by virtue of tracking, awards, demerits, and the whole system of organization. In reality, however, there are not two curricula; there is only one experienced by the student, and no part of it is hidden. Everything that happens in the school can be viewed as the curriculum. The impact of the total living and educational experience, both in the school and their daily living experiences is often blunted or diverted by contradiction between instructional material and the social organization of the school. What is learned in school is determined not solely by the content of the formal courses but by the total experience of the child; that is, how the place is organized, how it functions, how the people relate to each other within and through it to the surrounding world. What is necessary is a conscious awareness of the dramatic impact of the total life experience of the student on learning. This is a prerequisite for beginning to change to social organization of the school. Involved in this process are teachers, students, custodial personnel, and anyone who is having contact with the students. It is virtually impossible to detail specifically the form and content of the changes which occur in the life experiences of a given school. Any blueprint or directional prescription bypasses the crucial involvement of all individuals who are to be drawn into the examination of the school, situational development of priorities, and decision making. The special circumstances at the time of program development determine the tempo and direction of change.

Evaluation of educational programs traditionally involves some assessment of performance against some usually accepted professional and normative set of standards and procedures. A research concept usually includes the application of rigorous methods of assessment of the impact of the impact of the program on those it allegedly serves e.g. students. More simply, evaluation is related to the end point of a process designed to measure the effect of the program in terms of whether what was planned was accomplished. Evaluation in this context, measures

whether the program was "good" or "bad" in terms of the institution in which the program was conducted. This approach to evaluation quite often measures segments of a total program and the relationship of these segments to one another is infrequently drawn. This approach to evaluation cannot address itself to ways for implementing change, for they tend to identify the dynamics of the system without providing some of the strategies that aid in producing change. They also rely on evaluators external to the program for the conduct of the evaluation as opposed to the participants in that program contributing to its evolvement and implementation in schools where social change is a desirable outcome of an education, it appears that we need to move more and more in the direction of participants in social change role (coalition). The net effect can be a reduction in the credibility gap between theory and practice.

When one is evaluating, he assumes the existence of a pervasive value standard capable of incorporating different needs into a common set of evaluative criteria. Such a notion presumes that there is conformity in standards on a large scale; it also presumes a direct relationship between the value standard and overt action. These linkages then form the nexus between a value standard and what is functional at the operational level. Furthermore, this linkage becomes manifested in the ability of each person to draw a more meaningful relationhip between goals and strategies using a common value standard; this becomes an important aspect of program change and development. The information generated from this relationship becomes part of the evaluative process. We can not make any decisions relevant to the desired goals without it. If it is not possible for certain changes to be made, then these restrictions are major constraints in the design of the evaluation process. The dimension of decision priority ordinarily is not obvious in all learning situations. We can not say that certain decisions were either possible or impossible; rather, only that there were degrees of difficulty. The restrictions on the decision maker's role to manuever are variable parameters of behavior

which are determined by the quality of their relationship to others. Therefore, in evaluation we need to examine the extent to which program determinants e.g. values, are facilitating the learning process. Evaluation in this context becomes an assessment of a strategy, not a matter of testing for truth or falsity, or even of testing hypotheses.

Educational institutions are social and constantly change. The solution in which they are suspended is in a constant state of flux. While change must be viewed as functional to those involved in the change, it is often quite difficult to state what a functional degree of change is without entering into a value assessment. Too frequently change is dysfunctional, not only if the changes are unsoundly based; moreover, frequency of change itself might be dysfunctional.

Literature abounds with value considerations of planned change and the change agent role. Planned educational change is related to a group of value commitments from the part of the educator. The commitment is 1) to functioning in collaborative ways, 2) to basing plans for change upon valid information and knowledge, and 3) to reducing power potentials among individuals as a distorting influence on the determination of the tempo and direction of justifiable changes in the system. Value commitments in our educational institutions today are quite often ambiguous. Often they are not very clear in their relationship to the complex and confusing situation in which the educators function. Value orientations are often interwoven with knowledge and skills in such a way that the value component of a decision is difficult to identify. The confrontation which comes of value differences is often emotionally potent and subjective when one compares it to a confrontation of knowledge and skills. Most of us are wary about how to handle our own emotion and subjectivity. Consequently, we tend to avoid these kinds of confrontations. This appears to be particularly true in educational situations. Educators themselves have been taught about a value free ideal with respect to decision

making and problem solving, and consequently, they tend to feel uncomfortable when involved in explicating value commitments.

However, as the conditions of our society change, so do the processes for establishing goals and new involvements. It has been known for some time that educators are not making the best decisions when they use existing knowledge and skills that have been developed within a framework of assumed and unexamined traditions of beliefs and values. The patterns established within such a framework prescribe a method of operation for themselves and others. Therefore, since one's own value system is at least a partial determinant of behavior, it is incumbent upon each person to be consciously aware of how differences between rhetoric and behavior relate to one's own value commitments.

The emphasis on evaluation today unfortunately is on only one aspect of the learning process in the school -- namely, the formal or open part of the curriculum. Increasing attention needs to be given to the "hidden curriculum," i.e., action in halls, cafeteria, ball games, study halls, etc., which also makes a noticeable impact on the individual during the learning process. This attention can serve to develop an individual's capacity to articulate what his own value commitments are and what the relationship is to his behavior. In order for any evaluation process to be maximally effective, i.e., provide the quality of information which will enhance the opportunity of those in the educational process to learn, it appears necessary for educators to continue to explore ways by which the total curriculum can have a planned impact on the learner.

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